

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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R 031600Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6884

INFO AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY PANAMA

AMEMBASSY SEOUL

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAGUA 1710

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, NU

SUBJECT: VICE MINISTER TALKS OF DPRK VISIT

REF MANAGUA 1625

SUMMARY: VICE FOREIGN MINISTER BODAN ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THREE MAN DPRK TEAM HAD VISITED NICARAGUA RECENTLY BUT MINIMIZED IMPORTANCE OF VISIT AND SAID THAT NOTHING CONCRETE CAME OF IT. AS GENERAL PROPOSITION, HOWEVER, BODAN INDICATED THAT NICARAGUA WILL EMPHASIZE TRADE MORE AND IDEOLOGY LESS IN FOREIGN POLICY, AND PROMISED TO KEEP US BETTER INFORMED OF ANY CHANGES IN ITS RELATIONS WITH COMMUNIST COUNTRIES. SECRECY SURROUNDING VISIT SUGGEST LATENT CONTROVERSIAL NATURE INTERNALLY OF MORE PRAGMATIC FOREIGN POLICY, WHICH SOMOZA IS UNDOUBTEDLY DIRECTING PERSONALLY BUT WHICH HE IS RELUCTANT TO IDENTIFY PUBLICLY WITH.

1. VICE FOREIGN MINISTER HARRY BODAN BRIEFED POLOFF APRIL 28 ON RECENT VISIT TO NICARAGUA BY NORTH KOREAN MISSION, ATTEMPTING
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TO DISCOUNT IMPORTANCE OF TRIP THROUGHOUT THE CONVERSATION. BODAN

STATED THAT NORTH KOREANS HAD PESTERED NICARAGUAN DIPLOMATS AT UN AND ELSEWHERE (SIC) FOR SOME MONTHS FOR A CHANCE TO VISIT NICARAGUA AND EXPLAIN THEIR CAUSE. GON FINALLY ACCEDED, HE SAID, "OUT OF COURTESY, IF NOTHING ELSE." NORTH KOREAN DELEGATION CONSISTED OF HEAD OF ITS UN OBSERVER MISSION, ANOTHER MEMBER OF UN MISSION, AND THE CHIEF OF THE LATIN AMERICAN SECTION OF ECONOMIC AFFAIRS BUREAU OF DPRK FOREIGN MINISTRY WHO DOUBLED AS INTERPRETER. BODAN SAID THAT THERE WAS MUCH CONFUSION ABOUT THEIR NAMES AND WAS STILL NOT SURE WHAT THEY CALLED THEMSELVES.

2. ACCORDING TO BODAN, NORTH KOREANS MADE LOW KEY PITCH ABOUT THE NEED FOR NATIONS TO KNOW EACH OTHER BETTER DESPITE IDEOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES. ASSERTING THAT THEY HAD THE SAME LEVEL OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, THE NORTH KOREANS SUGGESTED THAT THEY MIGHT HELP EACH OTHER TO SOLVE SIMILAR PROBLEMS. THE DPRK DELEGATIONS STRESSED THE INDEPENDENCE OF NORTH KOREA, SAYING THAT KOREA HAD BEEN INVADED BY CHINESE, RUSSIANS, AMERICANS AND JAPANESE AND WERE THEREFORE SUSPICIOUS OF BIG POWERS. THEY ALLUDED VAGUELY TO THE POSSIBILITY OF ESTABLISHING DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS, AND SPECIFICALLY SUGGESTED THAT NICARAGUA SEND A TRADE MISSION.

3. BODAN DECLARED THAT HE WAS POLITE, BUT FIRM ABOUT THERE BEING NO POSSIBILITY THAT DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS COULD BE ESTABLISHED IN THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE. HE ALSO TOLD THEM THAT DISPATCH OF TRADE MISSION WOULD BE DIFFICULT. BODAN CONFIDED TO POLOFF THAT WHILE SENDING A MISSION MIGHT BE AWKWARD, SOUNDING OUT TRADE OPPORTUNITIES (WHICH HE SAID DID NOT APPEAR TOO ENCOURAGING AT FIRST GLANCE) MIGHT BE ACCOMPLISHED THROUGH OTHER MEANS. BODAN EMPHASIZED THAT WHILE IT DID NOT WANT TO COME TOO CLOSE TO HIM, NICARAGUA WAS NOW WILLING TO SELL TO THE DEVIL, IF THE PRICE WAS RIGHT.

4. BODAN APPEARED UNCOMFORTABLE WHEN POLOFF SUGGESTED THAT THE GON COULD HAVE KEPT US BETTER INFORMED ABOUT THE KOREANS' VISIT. WHILE DENYING THAT THEY HAD ANY WISH TO CONCEAL THE VISIT, HE STATED THAT THEY WANTED IT TO BE HANDLED AS DISCREETLY AS POSSIBLE. THE VISIT ITSELF WAS OF LITTLE IMPORTANCE, HE DECLARED, SINCE IT REPRESENTED NO POLICY DEPARTURE. HE GAVE ASSURANCES THAT NICARAGUA WOULD CONSULT FULLY WITH THE US IF SOMETHING CONCRETE

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DEVELOPED. ON THE OTHER HAND, HE EXPRESSED SURPRISE THAT THE EMBASSY HAD NOT LEARNED OF THE TRIP FROM OTHER SOURCES BOTH HERE AND IN NEW YORK.

5. COMMENT: BODAN'S REMARK ABOUT "SELLING TO THE DEVIL" IS THE FRANKEST STATEMENT MADE TO US YET BY AN AUTHORITATIVE SOURCE CONCERNING WHAT MANY SUSPECT IS THE DEVELOPMENT OF A MORE PRAGMATIC NICARAGUAN FOREIGN POLICY APPROACH IN WHICH THE TRADE

COMPONENT IS ENHANCED AND THE IDEOLOGICAL FACTOR IS REDUCED. THAT THE GON SAW A NEED FOR THE SECRECY WHICH SURROUNDED THE NORTH KOREAN VISIT SUGGESTS THAT IT RECOGNIZES THE POTENTIALLY CONTROVERSIAL NATURE OF THE NEW POLICY AND IS SENSITIVE TO THE FEELINGS OF SOME OF THE REGIME'S MOST FERVENT SUPPORTERS. AS AN EXAMPLE, SOMOZA'S UNCLE AND FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER LUIS MANUEL DEBAYLE, PRESENT HEAD OF THE ELCTRIC COMPANY, KNEW NOTHING OF THE KOREAN VISIT UNTIL THE DCM ASKED HIS OPINION AND WAS VISIBLY UPSET AND ANGRY WHEN HE FOUND OUT.

6. WHETHER A ONE-SHOT FLUKE OR A PORTENT, THE PRC'S HUGE PURCHASE OF 1974 COTTON (WHICH VAULTED IT INTO SECOND PLACE BEHIND JAPAN AS THE COUNTRY'S LEADING COTTON CUSTOMER), MAY HAVE AWAKENED THE REGIME TO THE GENUINE OPPORTUNITIES REPRESENTED BY TRADE WITH THE EAST. IN RETROSPECT, THE REPEAL OF THE LONG STANDING STATUTORY EMBARGO ON TRADE WITH THE COMMUNISTS SEEMS LIKELY TO HAVE BEEN PROMPTED BY THE COTTON DEAL. IN ADDITION TO THE NORTH KOREAN VISIT, THE AIR IS CURRENTLY FULL OF RUMORS ABOUT PLANNING FOR THE RENEWAL OF TRADE WITH CUBA (FOLLOWING THE LIFTING OF OAS SANCTIONS), ENLARGEMENT OF EASTERN EUROPEAN TRADE BY ESTABLISHMENT OF A RESIDENT MISSION IN POLAND (THE ONLY COMMUNIST COUNTRY HAVING RELATIONS WITH NICARAGUA), AND A RECENT VISIT OF A NICARAGUAN DELEGATION TO A PRC TRADE FAIR IN PANAMA. (VICE MINISTER BODAN SAID GROUP WAS FROM NATIONAL COTTON COUNCIL AND DID NOT INCLUDE ANY GON OFFICIALS.) EVEN THOUGH PRESIDENT SOMOZA AS LATE AS JANUARY PROFESSED IGNORANCE AND DISINTEREST AS TO THE FINAL DESTINATION OF THE 1974 COTTON CROP IN A CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFFS, DOUBTLESS HE IS PERSONALLY AUTHORIZING THE NEW PROBINGS ALTHOUGH YET RELUCTANT FOR DOMESTIC POLITICAL REASONS TO BECOME IDENTIFIED WITH THEM. SHELTON

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